

USASMA officials CSM William L. Jemison, battalion commander, and MAJ Dennis O'Brien, commandant, watch as SMA (Ret) William G. Bainbridge, cuts the ribbon celebrating completion of a new wing that will allow consolidation of all courses under one roof. Bainbridge was the first command sergeant major of USASMA.



USASMA:

25 Years of Growth and Achievement

By L. R. Arms

During the 1960s, the Army sought to give greater professionalism to the Noncommissioned Officer Corps. The Department of the Army established the Noncommissioned Officer Education System in 1969. The system sought to create a progressive education system for NCOs following four specific objectives:

- o to increase the professional quality of the NCO Corps;
- o to provide NCOs with opportunities for progressive, continuing professional development;
- o to enhance career attractiveness;
- o to provide the Army with trained and dedicated NCOs to fill positions of increased responsibility.

In the years that followed, it became apparent NCOES needed an institution to serve as the capstone of the system. On July 18, 1972, the Continental Army Command officially created the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, effective July 1, 1972. The mission of this new institution was to provide selected NCOs with a broad and varied in-depth educational

experience designed to qualify them for promotion to sergeant major and subsequent service in top-level NCO positions throughout the Army.

Working at a feverish pace, the staff of this fledgling institution developed a program of instruction and launched a pilot class in January 1973. The Sergeants Major Course proved to be a major success and a valuable asset to the Army. This success led to the development of the Sergeants Major Correspondence Course. On Sept. 1, 1974, the course began with a pilot class. The course paralleled the resident course, except for the electives.

In September 1974, the Fifth Army, in conjunction with the 90th Army Reserve Command and the Texas National Guard, conducted a Reserve NCOES pilot program. It combined correspondence study with live instruction. The program's success led to further efforts to implement NCOES in all Reserve components.

As the years passed, the role of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy became more vital to NCOES and the NCO Corps. During 1981, the academy expanded its role in NCOES. On June 3, 1981, USASMA was tasked with developing a common core curriculum for all schools teaching the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course (ANCOC). Later that year, on Oct. 5, the first official Department of the Army First Sergeant Course began. This course became the first senior NCO functional course assumed by USASMA outside of NCOES.

During 1981, the academy also opened the U.S. Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer. This museum not only displayed and depicted the role of the U.S. Army NCO throughout history, it also became the repository for all NCO history, including oral histories and historical documents.

The academy next expanded its NCOES role by becoming the proponent for the Primary Leadership and Development Course (PLDC). The concept for PLDC originated with the 24th Infantry Division, which sought to combine the best of the Primary NCO Course with the best of the Primary Leadership Course. When the results were briefed in April 1981 to the NCO Training Conference, many of the academies supported the idea.

An experimental version of PLDC was taught at three NCO academies in the 7th Army during early 1982. As the year progressed, the Army became more committed to the idea, and on July 23, 1982, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) issued a message announcing the decision to combine PNCOC and PLC into the single PLDC, with USASMA as the proponent.

Work on the final course to be developed for NCOES began in 1983. In March 1984, USASMA became the proponent for the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course (BNCOC) Common Core. By October 1985, the common core was validated at Ft. Hood, TX, and Ft. Devens, MA, and in January 1986, lesson material was distributed to the field.

In 1985 and 1986, two senior NCO functional courses were developed. The Operations and Intelligence Course began in January 1986 and the Personnel and Logistics Course was implemented in January 1988. Later, these two courses were combined into the Battle Staff NCO Course.

The Battle Staff NCO Course was designed to improve interaction of battle staff elements, focus on integrated command posts and broaden the understanding of staff roles. Six weeks in length, the course trains battalion and brigade staff NCOs to serve as integral members of battle staffs and manage day-to-day operations of battalion and brigade staff command posts. The first class started on Jan. 14, 1991.

The final senior NCO functional course to be added to USASMA's responsibilities was the Command Sergeant Major Course. In December 1988, GEN Carl Vuono, Chief of Staff, tasked USASMA to design, develop and field a Command Sergeant Major Course (CSMC). Classes 1 and 2 were conducted in 1989 with students from the already in-residence Sergeants Major Course.

Along with the growth of the academy as an educational institution, a second aspect demanded attention — the academy's classroom and office facilities. In 1972, the academy assumed control over buildings built for temporary use during World War II.

Through considerable work, these buildings were made presentable, but were inadequate to house a first-rate educational institution.

During 1973, the idea of creating a first-rate institution by developing a new academy building came to light. Years passed with little action, until 1981, when the project received

approval and the actual planning of the new academy began.

On Nov. 26, 1985, the academy conducted a ground breaking ceremony for the new complex. The \$18 million, 125,000-square-foot complex was scheduled for completion in November 1987.

On Aug. 27, 1987, USASMA Movement Order 87-1 began to fill the new complex with students, staff and faculty. Class 5-87 of the First Sergeants Course was the first to occupy the new complex, followed by Class 30 of the Sergeants Major Course. The headquarters wing was occupied during September and October. The opening ceremony for the new complex was held on Nov. 12, 1987.

Still, the academy continued to grow, and with the enlargement of the First Sergeant Course, the introduction of the Battle Staff Course and the Command Sergeants Major Course, and the advent of the nine-month Sergeants Major Course, more space was needed.

During the early 1990s, four major projects became the focal point of academy activities: creation of *The NCO Journal*, the nine-month course, distance learning and expansion of the existing facility.

The nine-month course required an extensive rewrite of the Sergeants Major Course and intensive effort for implementation.

Class 46 was the first Sergeants Major Course class to graduate from the nine-month course. It graduated with 200 students on May 31, 1996.

During 1996, USASMA conducted the first VTT Pilot Distance Learning Course—Battle Staff Course #1-97(T) — conducted from Aug. 20 to Nov. 22, 1996. The course consisted of 230 hours of instruction

and graduated 52 students. In 1994, work began on planning expansion of the existing 174,034-square-foot structure by 52,027-square-feet. This project was designed to place all elements of the academy, except the Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer, in one facility.

The facility houses the First Sergeant and Battle Staff courses. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for this facility was held June 25, 1997. Retired SMA William G. Bainbridge, the first command sergeant major of the academy, was the guest speaker at the ceremony.

After 25 years, the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy has grown and expanded beyond the dreams of its founders. It is not only the capstone of the NCOES, but guides the entire Army in developing trained, dedicated, professional noncommissioned officers. ■

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Photo by MSG Garbe Vega



SMA (Ret) Bainbridge accepts a token of appreciation from MAJ O'Brien for speaking at the new wing ribbon-cutting ceremony.